

# JFK'S PRIVATE OPINIONS OF PROMINENT PEOPLE

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The American public is getting some revealing insights into the mind of the late President John F. Kennedy.

Former close associates are telling his private opinions of people in high places, describing his frustrations and moods.

To the late President John Kennedy: Lyndon Johnson was a "riverboat gambler"; Dwight Eisenhower was "a terribly cold man"; Richard Nixon was a man who "has no taste"; Robert Kennedy should have been in the Central Intelligence Agency, instead of Attorney General.

These are some of the revealing new glimpses into the mind and moods of the slain President that are now being offered to the American public.

They come from the recent writings of men who were among Mr. Kennedy's closest associates during his 34 months in the White House.

It is, in some respects, a new Kennedy "image" that is emerging from these writings.

A frustrated leader? The "New Frontier" President is pictured as not always the buoyant and confident leader seen by the voters. He is described as a man who frequently felt frustrated in his job as President and at times grew bitterly angry about what he considered to be mistakes or shortcomings of his subordinates.

After the disastrous invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs, according to one account, "he put his head into his hands and almost sobbed."

Some JFK judgments. Mr. Kennedy is revealed as often sharp-tongued in his descriptions of public figures.

Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., gives some examples in "Life" magazine excerpts from his forthcoming book, "A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House."

Mr. Schlesinger, a historian who served Mr. Kennedy as a White House aide, reports the following on comments by the President—

On Lyndon Johnson: "He talked of Johnson with mingled admiration and

despair, calling him the 'riverboat gambler.' He added musingly, 'It really wouldn't be worthwhile being President if Johnson were Majority Leader.'"

On Dwight Eisenhower: "I could understand it if he played golf all the time with old Army friends, but no man is less loyal to his old friends than Eisenhower. He is a terribly cold man. All his golfing pals are rich men he has met since 1945."

On Richard Nixon: "He scorned the way Nixon opened his speeches with the 'Pat and I' greeting. 'He has no taste,' Kennedy said with contempt. On issues, he added with disarming candor, 'Nixon



—Wide World Photo

John Kennedy "talked of Johnson with mingled admiration and despair, calling him the 'riverboat gambler'."

is about as far advanced as I was 10 years ago."

On Barry Goldwater: "He thought Barry Goldwater was a man of decency and character."

On Hubert Humphrey: In the 1960 campaign for the presidential nomination, "He said that obviously there were no important differences between Humphrey and himself on issues; it came down to a difference in personalities: 'Hubert is too intense for the present mood of the people.'"

Of his brother Edward ("Ted") Kennedy, now U.S. Senator from Massachusetts, President Kennedy is quoted as saying:

"My father . . . held up standards for us, and he was very tough when we failed to meet those standards. The toughness was important. If it hadn't been for that, Teddy might be just a playboy today. But my father cracked down on him at a crucial time in his life

[the reference, says Mr. Schlesinger, was to a cheating incident in Teddy's fresh-

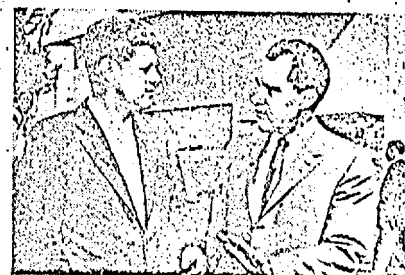
man year at Harvard], and this brought out in Teddy the discipline and seriousness which can make him an important political figure."

On Allen Dulles, former head of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA): "I probably made a mistake in keeping Allen Dulles," he said. "It's not that Dulles



—USN&WR Photo

Former President Eisenhower is said to have been described by Mr. Kennedy as "a terribly cold man"



—UPI Photo

"He has no taste," Mr. Kennedy is quoted as having said about Richard M. Nixon, his 1960 opponent

is not a man of great ability. He is. But I have never worked with him, and therefore I can't estimate his meaning when he tells me things. . . . Dulles is a legendary figure, and it's hard to operate with legendary figures."

State Department a "puzzle." The State Department is described as one of Mr. Kennedy's chief frustrations. Mr. Schlesinger reports:

"It was a constant puzzle to Kennedy that the State Department remained so formless and impenetrable. He would come back to the Mansion at night and remark to Jacqueline, 'Damn it, Bundy [McGeorge Bundy, a White House as-

sistant] and I get more done in one day

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## HISTORICAL NOTES

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## From the Professor's Notebook

As a special assistant to President John F. Kennedy, Harvard Professor Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. did some troubleshooting in Latin American affairs, traveled south with a Food-for-Peace mission, served as idea man and occasional speechwriter. And since he was also a Pulitzer-prizewinning historian, his memoirs of the Kennedy years were much in demand. Now, in a LIFE series based on a forthcoming book, Schlesinger offers some intriguing new details regarding two of John F. Kennedy's biggest—and most controversial—decisions.

"He Grabbed." The first was the selection of Lyndon Johnson as Kennedy's vice-presidential running mate in the 1960 election. Schlesinger reports that Kennedy had previously viewed Johnson "with mingled admiration and despair," referred to the Texan as the "riverboat gambler." But, declares Schlesinger, on the night he was nominated Kennedy decided to make the "first offer" of the vice-presidency to Johnson as a gesture aimed at reuniting the Democrats. Because of the bitterness of the Kennedy-Johnson fight for the nomination and Johnson's power as Senate majority leader, writes Schlesinger, Kennedy "was certain that there was practically no chance that Johnson would accept."

To Kennedy's amazement, "Johnson showed every interest in the project." Schlesinger quotes Kennedy as telling a friend: "I didn't offer the vice-presidency to him. I just held it out like this—here he simulated taking an object out of his pocket and holding it close to his body—and he grabbed at it." Jack dispatched Brother Bobby to the Johnson hotel suite. Bobby, writes Schlesinger, "said that he was there to report that an ugly floor fight was in prospect. If Senator Johnson did not want to subject himself to this kind of unpleasantness, Senator Kennedy would fully understand. Should Johnson prefer to withdraw, the candidate would wish to make him chairman of the Democratic National Committee."

Relates Schlesinger: "Johnson said with great and mournful emotion, 'I want to be Vice President . . . ' Robert Kennedy said cryptically, 'He wants you to be Vice President if you want to be Vice President.'" Later, Bobby leaned "against the wall and said . . . 'My God, this wouldn't have happened except that we were all too tired last night.'"

Asked at his press conference last week about Schlesinger's version, President Johnson maintained that he had truly been wanted. Kennedy, said L.B.J., "asked me on his own motion to go on the ticket with him, and I gave him my reasons for hesitating." Johnson's old friend and congressional patron, the late House Speaker "Mr. Sam" Rayburn, approved by Release 2001/08/28 : CIA-RDP75-00419R000000340014-9



MEMOIR WRITER SCHLESINGER

*If they all hadn't been so tired,*

was virtually everyone else in Johnson's camp. But Kennedy, President Johnson declared at his news conference, "told me he would speak to Speaker Rayburn and others and he did. And subsequently he called me and said, 'Here is a statement I'm going to read on television naming you, unless you have an objection.' I listened to it. After I heard it, I felt that I should do what I did."

"Wail of S.O.S.s." Then there is Schlesinger's account of the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion against Cuba's Castro. The idea, Schlesinger recalls, had been inherited from the Eisenhower Administration. Schlesinger says that Kennedy found it distasteful—and so did Schlesinger. Once Schlesinger discussed with the President a White Paper on Cuba that he had been asked to draw up. "As we finished, I said, 'What do you think about this damned invasion?' He said wryly, 'I think about it as little as possible.'" But the plan was favored by the CIA, the Joint Chiefs and most of the Cabinet. In a remarkable portrayal of a President and his top policy officials, Schlesinger describes Kennedy as "a prisoner of events," surrounded by "a collection of officials prepared to sacrifice the world's growing faith in the new American President in order to defend interests and pursue objectives of their own."

On March 11, a month before the invasion, Schlesinger was summoned to a meeting with the President in the Cabinet Room. "An intimidating group sat around the table . . . I shrank into a chair at the far end of the table and listened in silence." Kennedy, Schlesinger writes, "insisted that the plans be drawn on the basis of no United States military intervention—a stipulation to which no one at the table made objection." Later, when the "only signal from the beach was a wail from the President, in his bedroom, 'put his head into his hands and almost sobbed.'"

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